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TRUTH IN THEATRICAL WORKS

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TRUTH IN THEATRICAL WORKS

A Master's Thesis

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To my loving parents and brother



TRUTH IN THEATRICAL WORKS

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of

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by

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

TRUTH IN THEATRICAL WORKS

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The question of how to define truth in fiction has caught the interest of many philosophers. The reason for this lies in the complexity of claiming whether fictional entities exist or not. Most philosophers have dealt with truth in relation to prose fiction. My interest, on the contrary, lies in how we can identify truth in theatrical works. The question is intriguing because theatre contains literary as well as performative elements. The latter element renders it difficult to identify truth in theatre. There are immeasurable plays based on one script alone, and this makes it difficult to form true statements about a particular play. In this thesis, I take into account three different theories on truth in

theatre. The first one is that of David Lewis. The truth conditions he provides and the possible worlds account are applicable only to prose fiction. He disregards the performative aspect of theatre, and that is why I eliminate his account. I next examine Kendall Walton's imagination and prop theory, but I don't find his account satisfactory either. Although Walton acknowledges the performative aspect of theatre, he cannot give an account of avant-garde theatre. I finally look into a more recent account, which is Michael Morris's real likenesses view. Morris comes closest in defining truth in theatre, yet his account fails due to his inability of defining what the medium is in theatre. Ultimately, I argue that the existing theories of truth in fiction do not give a tenable account of truth in theatrical works.

Keywords: Theatre, Truth, Fiction, Non-Distraction Thesis, Collective Agency

ÖZET

TİYATRO ESERLERİNDEKİ GERÇEKLİK

Çelik, Zeynep

Yüksek Lisans, Felsefe Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. William Giles Wringe

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Kurguda gerçeğin nasıl tanımlanacağı sorusu birçok felsefecinin ilgisini çekmiştir. Bunun nedeni, kurgusal varlıkların var olup olmadığını iddia etmenin karmaşıklığında yatmaktadır. Çoğu felsefeci, düzyazı kurguyla ilgili olarak gerçekliği ele almıştır. Benim ilgim, aksine, teatral eserlerde gerçekliği nasıl tespit edebileceğimizdir. Soru merak uyandırıcı çünkü tiyatro, edebi olduğu kadar performatif öğeler de içeriyor. İkinci unsur, tiyatrodaki gerçeği tanımlamayı zorlaştırır. Tek bir senaryoya dayanan ölçülemez oyunlar var ve bu da belirli bir oyun hakkında doğru ifadeler oluşturmayı zorlaştırıyor. Bu tezde,

tiyatroda gerçeklik üzerine üç farklı teoriyi dikkate alıyorum. İlki David Lewis'in görüşleri. Sağladığı gerçeklik koşulları ve mümkün dünyalar hesabı sadece düzyazı kurgu için geçerlidir. Tiyatronun performatif yönünü göz ardı ediyor ve bu yüzden onun hesabını ortadan kaldırıyorum. Daha sonra Kendall Walton'ın hayal gücünü ve destek teorisini inceleyeceğim, ancak onun hesabını da tatmin edici bulmuyorum. Sorun şu ki Walton tiyatronun performatif yönünü kabul ediyor ama avangard tiyatro hakkında bir açıklama yapamıyor. Sonunda, Michael Morris'in gerçek benzerlik görüşü olan daha yeni bir hesaba bakıyorum. Morris, tiyatroda gerçeği tanımlamaya en yakın olanıdır, ancak tiyatroda tanımlayıcı bir ortamın olmaması nedeniyle açıklaması başarısız olur. Sonuç olarak, kurmacada var olan gerçeklik teorilerinin teatral eserlerde gerçekliğin savunulabilir bir açıklamasını vermediğini iddia ediyorum.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Tiyatro, Gerçeklik, Kurmaca, Distraksiyonsusuzluk Tezi, Kolektif Eyleycilik

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of this thesis is to argue that the existing theories of truth in fiction do not give a tenable account of truth in theatrical works. There is an abundance of literature on the philosophy of fiction, and even philosophy of film. However, there is very little on philosophy of theatre, particularly within analytic philosophy. The most notable example for philosophy of theatre is perhaps James R. Hamilton's *The Art of Theatre* (2007). In general, theories of truth in fiction have excluded theatrical works from the discussion, and this is because philosophers have dealt with truth in fiction with regards to broadly prose fiction. Even when they do refer to truth in theatre, they treat it as prose fiction.

In order to give a satisfactory account of truth in theatre, I shall initially illustrate the underlying problem in Chapter 1. I argue that there lie three essential questions to be answered: What is the work of art in theatre? Who is the artist? What is the medium of theatrical works? After giving my own account for each of the questions, I move onto Chapter 2 where I examine David Lewis's account, which asserts that truth in fiction is established through the explicit content of the fiction, the background facts that people

have based on the actual world, and carry-over from other truth in fiction. I ultimately reject Lewis's account because he cannot cope with the performative aspect of theatre.

In Chapter 3, I examine Kendall Walton's account of truth in fiction where he defends an imagination-based account and the generation of truths. Although Walton acknowledges the performative aspect of theatre, his account becomes problematic in avant-garde cases. In the final chapter, I look at a more recent theory; Morris's account of real likenesses. Though his account comes closest in defining truth in theatre, I'll argue that it is incomplete because it relies on claims about the medium. Although his Non-Distraction Thesis seems defensible, Morris cannot give an account for two objections I raise. Even though Morris's account comes closest in defining truth in theatre, I ultimately argue that none of the three theories can give a satisfactory account.

CHAPTER 1

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

This chapter focuses on three essential questions. The first one deals with what the work of art is in theatre. This is a crucial question as one cannot talk about truth in theatre without addressing what the work of art really is. Similarly, I elaborate on who the artist is. When addressing questions of truth in theatre, it is important to specify whose account one must listen to in order to define truth. Must we take the director's choices into consideration, the scriptwriters', or the actor's choices? Finally, I question what the author manipulates in order to produce the work of art. Namely, what is the medium? There are a range of elements where one might consider helpful in creating the theatrical work. These questions are essential because it seems like we cannot address questions about truth in fiction without addressing what the work of theatre is, who the artist is, and what the medium is. In particular, it seems that some theories of truth in prose fiction can't easily be adapted to cover performative works.

I shall begin by examining what I take the work of art to be in cases of theatrical works. James R. Hamilton argues that there should be a strict line that divides the text and the performance (Hamilton, 2007: 26). Each is a form of art in their own kind. In response to this, I will present a combinational view which asserts that the work of art is a combination of the text *and* the performance. The next question I will examine is who the artist is in theatrical works. While Hamilton argues that the director is the author, I take a collaborative approach to the question. Namely, I believe that the author is a collaboration of the text, director, and the actors who star in the performance. I will then introduce the notion of a medium in theatre. Although works like paintings, photographs, and novels have a clear-cut idea of what the medium is, I believe that theatrical works do not give an evident account of the medium. I will then address an important question: What exactly is the medium in theatrical works? I will argue that the answer to this question is a lot more complicated to answer in relation to other works of art. In order to identify truth in theatrical works, I believe giving an account to these questions is crucial.

Philosophers like Kendall Walton and David Lewis have given accounts of truth in prose fiction, yet they haven't said much regarding works where there is both a literary and a performative aspect. As Morris's theory gives the closest account of truth in theatre, I take his definition of the medium into consideration. His characterization of a medium is whatever the artist manipulates in order to produce the work of art (Morris, 2020: 22). Though these philosophers have given accounts for prose fiction, my main concern is

whether they can be adapted to give an account of truth in theatre. I ultimately argue that they can't be because of the performative aspect of theatre.

1.1 What is the Theatrical Work of Art?

In cases of other forms of art, it is relatively easier to determine what the work of art is.

In cases of novels, the novel itself is the obvious work of art. It is the same case for paintings, photographs, and sculptures. Yet, in theatrical works of art, I believe that this is not so obvious. Is it the script that is the work of art, or is it the performance? It seems that in James Hamilton's view of theatrical performances, there are two separate forms of art: on the one hand, the text is a work of art, on the other hand the performance is the art (Hamilton, 2007: XII). The reason for this is that watching a performance is what matters for Hamilton. It is quite common in daily speech to say something of the form "I would see anything written by Beckett". When saying this, we do not mean that we will watch the *script*, but rather we are interested in the performance itself. This, according to Hamilton, indicates that theatrical performances are not *of* particular literary works (works of dramatic literature). Instead, they are forms of art in their own right (Hamilton, 2007: XII).

He introduces multiple models for the text-performance relation. The model he defends is the ingredients model where the basis is the performance *itself*, not the script. This indicates that on Hamilton's account, we cannot assess things in terms of faithfulness.

The faithfulness standard asserts that the performance is not based on the script, but rather that the performance itself is a form of art on its own (Hamilton, 2007: 31). Thus, in Hamilton's view, there is a clear distinction between scripts and performances as separate forms of works of art.

The ingredients model asserts that the text merely provides the words and ideas to be used in the performance, and that the performance is essentially what determines the work's identity (Hamilton, 2007: 31). Hamilton argues that the audience "establish performance identity by means of reference to the performance itself, as the only relevant account of performance identity" (Hamilton, 2007: 33). However, it seems impossible to dissect theatre into two separate parts. I think that the term "theatre" by definition contains a duality of scripts and performances. Therefore, the performance and the script seem inseparable.

We use terms like adaptations, interpretations, or parodies for the reason that we cannot view the text as something separate from the performance. We refer to the work with one of these terms to indicate that there is still a connection between the script and the performance. Another problem I see with this view is that examining a performance itself as *the only* relevant account of performance identity is a bit extreme. People do not always arrive at a theatre not knowing anything about the play. Some audience members attend the performance *only because* they have had experience with the script beforehand

(or they have knowledge of the play's content by other means). My view is a problem for Hamilton because if we ask someone "which play did you go and see?", we're asking a different question from "which performance did you see?". Thus, what identifies which play you went to see, is at least in part the script. It's not about *why* the people see things, but what is the criterion of identity. That is why I find it absurd to say that we understand performance identity solely based off of the performance alone.

In response to Hamilton's notion, I hold that the script and the performance should not be as rigidly distinguished as in Hamilton's view. Instead, I hold what I call a "combinational view" of theatrical art. This view asserts that the theatrical work is a combination of the text (the script) and the performance. Although Hamilton's notion is that a performance is an art form of its own right, I still believe that one must not separate the performance entirely from the script. Indeed, every performance is unique and different from one another. Yet, they all take the initial script to be the basis of what they should perform and how they should do it. The reason for this is that people read the script, *and then* decide what types of adjustments need to be made. Scripts provide background knowledge of the performance. I believe that they function as paratexts where the audience can get information about the work without seeing the performance.

Moreover, scripts help the audience determine some true things about the performance even before they've seen the enactment happen. It isn't the case that people go to see a

play not knowing anything about the play. People bring with them some sort of knowledge to the performance from the script. If someone went to see Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1919), and the actor playing Jaques mis-delivered his line as: "All the world's a *cage*, and all the men and women merely players", it would seem that the viewer might recognize this as a fault. If there were no script, the audience couldn't say that the actor mis-read his lines. Thus, the script provides some kind of truth in relation to the performance being enacted. Therefore, the ultimate deciding factor for what the performance should look like essentially depends on the script that the actors and directors refer to. Hence, I believe that the work of art in theatre is both the script *and* the performance.

Before proceeding on to the next section, I must expand on what I mean when I say that the theatrical work of art is the script *and* the performance. Three questions arise when I argue for this combinational view: 1) What is a text? 2) What is a performance? 3) What does the 'and' mean? The view I hold is that theatrical works of art are concrete particulars corresponding to individual performances. What I mean by a text is that I think it's an abstract object. There's one text and lots of copies of it, just as we might say there's one text of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (2001) and there's lots of instances of it. But the performance isn't like that.

In saying that scripts are abstract objects, I should first explain what the case for novels is. When we talk about *Anna Karenina* as a novel, what are we talking about? We're not talking about *my* physical copy of *Anna Karenina*. There's lots of things that are true about *my* physical copy of the novel that are true of *Anna Karenina* the novel. For example, my copy might be missing page 342. But if somebody asked "what happens when Anna arrives at the train station?", the answer isn't "nothing happens because the page is missing". So, there is an abstract object that is the novel *Anna Karenina* that is somehow independent of actual copies of the novel. And that's true because there are some things that are true about the copies that aren't true about the novel. And there are some things true about the novel that aren't true about the copies. For example, asking how many pages *Anna Karenina* is has to do with the copy and not the work.

Scripts are also similar to novels. The distinction that I made between the copy of *Anna Karenina* and the text is the same as a distinction I can make between the text of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (2008) and the copies of it. These distinctions tie to the discussion of types and tokens found in different contexts of philosophy. As I showed above, the type-token distinction works for scripts, but it's not so obvious that it works for performances. When we think about theatre, we might not want to see different performances of a play as being different tokens of the same type. I believe that three performances of *Hamlet* (1899) on three consecutive nights are *three performances*. And this is because we do expect every performance to be different from one another. The

theatrical work of art is not the text, it's not even the production of the text, but it's the performance.

1.2 Who is the Artist?

As mentioned above, Hamilton takes the performance itself as a separate kind of art form. He argues that the artist of a dramatical work is the director. The author (writer) in the case of novels is considered the artist. But what about in the case of dramatical works? Asserting that the artist is the director poses a problem for me in that I presume that a director is not always strictly and solely the essential figure in determining how things should play out in a performance. The reason for this is that there are simply too many people involved in a play, and this complicates who has the ultimate control. For instance, the actors who are starring in the play may occasionally come together and discuss what they should do and how they should do it. Thus, they become a group that has agency over their own performance. Perhaps when the actors take action for what they have discussed amongst themselves, all the producer can do is approve, improve, or disprove their decision.

Overall, the artist seems to be a collective agent. Even in cases where there *is* a director, it is surely evident that he doesn't direct *everything* by himself. For example, in a case where the actress forgets her lines and decides to improvise, the director naturally cannot have power over the situation at that moment. The control is left to the actress alone in

this situation. Additionally, the director may tell the makeup artist what to do, but not *how* to do it exactly. With the exception of the case I have just mentioned, even if there is a director, there still remains a collective agent who is involved in producing the play. The deciding factor is thus distributed among the members within the play's production.

In explaining this question, I defend a collaborative view of authorship in theatrical works of art. That is, I hold that the artist is a collaboration of the author who wrote the text, the director who produces the performance, and the actors who often decide amongst themselves as to how the play should turn out. It is crucial for me to note here that there is a difference between the theatrical work of art and the script. A script can have a single author, but when referring to the authorship issue in this section, I'm not alluding to who the author of the script is. To clarify, when asked 'Who is the author of *King Lear*?', the answer is indeed Shakespeare. But when we ask questions about who the artist is in the theatrical performance, then the answer has to be the collaborative authorship. Thus, there is a distinction between the work of art and the script.

The collaborative view of authorship shares relevance with Margaret Gilbert's "Walking Together" (1990). In this article, Gilbert questions what it really means to be a part of a social group, or collectivity. I've taken her account into consideration because Gilbert gives importance to the notion of having a joint commitment. What this means is that the members of a group have a shared belief or principle (Gilbert, 1990: 9). It is this

commitment that makes people a part of the collective agent. This notion is relevant to my views because I argue that various people in theatre have a joint commitment.

Applying Gilbert's proposal of joint commitment is also important for authorship in theatre because it provides a good account for the scriptwriter's inclusion into the collective agent in cases where they are deceased before the play is performed. The scriptwriter is committed to the joint activity because writing a script is like writing a will. Scriptwriters intend that their scripts get performed. That is, the scriptwriter intends that the actors and directors use the script as the basis for guidance. He intends that the actors and director do certain things a certain way, and the important thing is that his intentions do not change after he is deceased. Thus, in a collective authorship in theatre, the scriptwriter can have ongoing intentions even if he is dead.

Gilbert reduces the concept of social groups to such a level that even taking a walk with somebody can form a social group (Gilbert, 1990: 2). This portrays how even such small-scale temporary acts, which seem insignificant, can be a determining factor for what a social group is, and who can take part in it. Gilbert asserts that when two or more people take a walk together, "each must act as would the parts of a single person or subject of action in pursuit of the goal. Or: they are to act as members of a single body, the body comprising the two of them" (Gilbert, 1990: 8). The members must have a joint or shared goal which should lead them to act as a *single body* (Gilbert, 1990: 9). When two or more

people in a group have a shared goal, each individual must desire to participate in the shared pool of wills where each individual is dedicated to that same goal. Gilbert calls such people "plural subjects" (1990: 7).

Further, in order for people to participate in actions of going on walks together, they must form a plural subject where the members naturally use terms like "us", "we", "our belief", etc. This shows that there is a close connection between plural subjecthood and social groups. Terms like "we" and "us" indicate that there is group membership (Gilbert, 1990: 10). I believe that Gilbert's idea of plural subjects shares a relatively explicit similarity with the collaborative view I have introduced earlier. The text, director, and actors of a theatrical performance function as a single body, whose individuals have a shared goal, and they work together to achieve this goal. In the case of drama, this shared goal is simply to produce a theatrical performance. Therefore, my view of the collaborative authorship shows that there is collectivity and plural subjects in a theatrical production that functions as a group agency when referring to who the author is in a theatrical work.

1.2.1 A Caveat

There then remains inquiries about whether crew members should be considered authors.

Christy Mag Uidhir argues in his "Minimal Authorship" (2010) that they shouldn't because they are directed by the intentions of others. There are key grips¹ whose help is crucial to produce a given work, yet since they obey people like the film directors, cinematographers, graphic designers, and print artists, they do not have important production roles (Uidhir, 2010: 5). His central aim in putting forth this view is to argue that members like the key grips are not included in the authorship of the work. Uidhir gives examples of the printmakers in novels, yet these contributors are still not counted as the authors of a work. Uidhir's approach raises interesting questions as to whether we should include the backstage crew into the definition of a theatrical performance's medium or not. On the other hand, Gilbert's account of plural subjects is all-inclusive in that she says whoever participates in the activity has access to a pool of wills where each participant has a shared goal (1990: 7). This seems to imply that every participant has shared intentions. So then, should the crew members be included into authorship or not?

This question is complicated on a number of levels. For one, it evidently complicates who we should count as the author of a theatrical work. Secondly, theatre includes numerous on-stage and off-stage members. It seems sensible to divide the crew members as ones who contribute creatively to the performance, and those who do not. For instance, one might argue that the lighting designer contributes creatively to a performance. In scene 9

¹ Key grips are people who work with the camera equipment in filmmaking.

of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Lear roams in the storm and curses the weather (Lear, 2000: 180-183). A lighting designer might use lights as a powerful source to draw attention to this scene. He may use different techniques to place the lights appropriately, and he may use different tones of light to resemble an actual storm. In any case, he will do his job in such a way so that the scene is presented at its most effective. It is in this sense that the lighting designer can contribute creatively to the performance. Similarly, the wardrobe and makeup crew can also contribute creatively. Applying makeup on the actors is a unique form of artistry in itself because the artist applies makeup based on their own creative abilities. On the other hand, there are members like the stagehands², who do not contribute creatively to the performance³.

The reason why stagehands are a complicated case is that on a Gilbertian account, they should *ideally* be included into the authorship. Their intentions are reflected into the final product of the play. Therefore, each participant has a degree of importance, and they each ultimately intend that the production turns out well. Other cases resembling the

² Their job includes setting up the props, scenery, lights, sound, and special effects in film and theatre productions.

³ One exception where the stagehands might get creative is in a case like the following: If *all* the director tells the stagehands is that the next scene should resemble a zombie apocalypse, the stagehand then has the freedom to arrange the props however he wants. But excluding cases like this, they usually don't creatively contribute much.

stagehands include the call boy⁴, house manager⁵, fly crew⁶, etc. In addition, the prompter seems to pose a similar problem too. His job is to remind actors the lines if they have forgotten them, or directs the actors as to where they should stand on the stage. This task also does not require any special skill. It does not contribute creatively to the performance. It is clear that the division of participants who contribute creatively and those who don't poses a problem for who gets to be included in the authorship. My account is that there seems to be a *degree* in which participants are considered authors where some are more important than others. Thus, I establish a hierarchical account of authorship where the collaborative authors (i.e., the author of the text, the performance director, and the actors) lie at the top. Next, there are those who contribute creatively (like the lighting and costume designers, and makeup artists, etc.). And lastly, the ones who do not have direct contributions (like the ticket house managers, technicians, ushers, etc.). This indicates that the collaborative authorship view I had presented encapsulates even a broader range of participants, even though there is a degree of importance to them.

1.3 Medium

1.3.1 What is a Medium?

⁴ Call boy: A person who moves from backstage to the actor's rooms in order to inform them that it is time for their entrances.

⁵ House manager: They are in charge of selling tickets. Although they contribute to the performance, this is nevertheless indirect. The house manager works under the house manager title, and not the theatrical troupe.

⁶ Fly crew: They operate a fly system during a performance.

Now that I have established what the work of art is, and who the artist of theatrical works is, it is time to examine what a medium of a theatrical work is. The broader purpose of examining what the medium is is that I will examine whether Morris's Non-Distracton Thesis applies to theatre. In Michael Morris's view, works of art have a medium and a content. His thesis in *Real Likenesses* is that "Attending to the medium of a representational work cannot inevitably be a distraction from attending to its content, or vice versa" (Morris, 2020: 21). This is known as the Non-Distracton Thesis. He defines mediums as whatever the artist manipulates in order to produce the work of art. For instance, in painting, the medium is taken to be the canvas, paintbrush, paint, etc.

In the case of novels, Morris takes the author-centered view to be the medium, meaning that whatever the artist uses in order to create the work is the medium. Thus, words and language are the key forms of medium used to produce novels (Morris, 2020: 160). On the other hand, the content includes the novels characters (people, creatures, landscapes, buildings, events, etc.). While these tools used for determining the medium are fairly evident in cases of paintings, photographs, and novels, I believe that it is not so apparent in the cases of theatrical works.

It is a commonly shared notion that specifying the essential medium of a work of art is crucial. However, James R. Hamilton argues in his *Art of Theatre* that this notion of having a fixed medium is "simply untenable" (Hamilton, 2007: 34). It is evident that

theatrical performances pose a problem for this common view of having a fixed medium. That is why Hamilton says that there is no obvious single medium of theatrical performances. Agreeing with this view, I believe that there is not a rigid medium for theatrical performances since it is relatively vague as to what should be included within the medium. The naturally preceding question to ask would be: what is the medium in theatrical works of art?

1.3.2 What is the Medium in Theatre?

The answer to this question is less overt in comparison to answering it for other works of art. As I've mentioned, in cases of photography, the medium can be the camera itself, and the object that is being photographed. In the case of theatrical works, I think that simply saying that the text or the performance is the medium is not enough. In addition to the text and performance, I believe that the actors, the stage, the stage props, the prompter, people in charge of costumes, makeup, and lighting, and any other backstage crew should be included into the medium of a play. But more importantly, I think that the *audience itself* is also a medium. In cases of improvisation and breaking the fourth wall, the audience is used by the actors in order to add depth into the play. Likewise, there are interactive plays where the audiences' reactions become a crucial part of the performance itself. This is often the case with theatre written for children. For instance, some shopping malls in Turkey organize plays for children, and they are meant to be interactive. It is in this sense that the actors use the audience as a medium.

In the previous section about authorship, I had mentioned Uidhir's stance. I had argued that participants like the crew members are not a part of the authorship. However, should they be included into the medium? Uidhir gives examples of the printmakers in novels. Yet, I think that it is natural for the printmakers to not be a part of the *immediate medium* since writing a novel is a long-term process. On the other hand, a theatrical performance requires spontaneity and on-the-spot actions. Every member of the crew has an important job, just as the printmaker. But contrarily the theatre crew all has *immediate roles* to play. A person in charge of the stage lighting *must* do his job at that very moment, whereas a printmaker is not crucial at the very time the novel is being written. Of course, they are all important members, but the case in theatre is special because a performance is instantaneous. There is a 'now or never' quality in it. It must also be mentioned that, for example, the ticket salesman who sells the audience their tickets plays the same role as the printmaker case. Selling tickets is crucial, but it is not *immediately* relevant to the performance. In short, I have illustrated how the medium of theatrical works is far more diverse and inclusive in comparison to the medium in other art forms. I have shown the importance of contributing to the production immediately, in contrast to contributing eventually.

CHAPTER 2

LEWIS'S POSSIBLE WORLDS ACCOUNT

In this chapter, I shall begin with Lewis's account of truth in theatre. His account relies on his theory of possible worlds, and three truth conditions. After having explained his views, I shall raise three objections, the first of which is concerned with Lewis's disregard of the performative aspect of theatre. He focuses on prose fiction, but even when he exemplifies a play, he takes merely the script into account. I then question what Lewis might to the nature of intertextuality in theatre. Lastly, I examine adaptations of plays in possible worlds.

I then proceed to examine whether Lewis's theory could be applicable to experimental theatre, and conclude that it cannot for two reasons: Firstly, his notion of the community's overt beliefs isn't coherent with Absurdist plays. Secondly, I criticize avant-garde theatre and Lewis's neglect of performances.

2.1 Truth in Fiction: Introducing the Problem

Prior to illustrating the three accounts of fiction, I believe giving my account of what ‘truth’ is seems to be of the greatest priority. By truth, I mean how we can truly speak of theatrical works. In addition, I think this account of ‘truth’ that I have illustrated naturally entails looking further into what kinds of truths there are *within* the work of art itself. When we say a sentence like “Cordelia has five fingers”, how are we sure that this statement is true? If this information isn’t provided in the fiction, is it possible that we are merely assuming the truth of the statement, or do we have other means of finding it out? One of the clearest accounts I have stumbled upon is David Lewis’s theory of truth, which I will begin with.

A sentence like “Cordelia has five fingers” is true in a sense because the readers assume that she does have five fingers. We base this interpretation on the facts of the real world, and this gives us a good enough justification to say that the sentence is true. On the other hand, claiming that it *is* true is a bit problematic because fictional beings do not exist in actuality. Thus, there is an ambiguity regarding truth in fiction. Lewis’s approach to this problem is by introducing truth conditions that can help us identify truth in fiction.

2.2 Lewis's Possible Worlds Account

I will begin with Lewis as his account is broadly recognized in this field. Lewis's theory is focused on written prose fiction. He provides examples from short stories and plays. Due to this focus on written fiction, Lewis makes it central to his theory that there must be either an implicit or an explicit narrator. As I will explain in depth below, I eliminate Lewis's theory because it isn't applicable to theatrical works. Applying his three requirements in defining truth in fiction is simply untenable for theatrical works mainly because it is constructed for written fiction rather than works that include both a performative and a literary element. Moreover, his focus on merely written prose fiction is an indication of the limitedness of his view. Because this account is narrow in scope, I will follow up with Walton's account since he improves Lewis's theory.

I shall first explain how Lewis addresses the problem of determining truth in works of fiction. He uses his theory of possible worlds to question this matter. He believes in the physical and concrete existence of infinite possible worlds. The first question he examines is: how can we hold that certain things are true about fictional characters when these characters don't even exist? For one, we automatically assume that statements about fictions are implicitly prefixed by the phrase, "In the fiction f ...". Meaning, we regard these statements as abbreviations for longer sentences, such as: "In the fiction of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, ...". (Lewis, 1978: 37-38). The worlds that Lewis takes

into account are the ones where fiction is told as known fact, rather than fiction. In the actual world, storytelling is falsely purported whereas in the other world, the fiction simply is. In the possible world, there is the “truth-telling about matters whereof the teller has knowledge” (Lewis, 1978: 40).

Lewis introduces three analyses in order to create the most refined theory of truth in fiction. He settles on the last one, Analysis 2, as it is an improvement of Analyses 0 and

1. Lewis formulates Analysis 2 in the following way (Lewis, 1978: 45):

A sentence of the form 'In the fiction f , ϕ ' is non-vacuously true iff, whenever w is one of the collective belief worlds of the community of origin f , then some world where f is told as known fact and ϕ is true differs less from the world w , on balance, than does any world where f is told as known fact and ϕ is not true. It is vacuously true iff there are no possible worlds where f is told as known fact.

The key word in this analysis is “collective belief”. Lewis believes that the proper background we have in the actual world consists of “the beliefs that generally prevailed in the community where the fiction originated: the beliefs of the author and his intended audience” (Lewis, 1978: 44). The background is thus fixed by the overt beliefs of the community, and the author himself/herself.

Lewis disregards Analysis 0 because it disregards our factual background beliefs, and this results in too many possible worlds (1978: 41). In Analysis 1, he deliberates on the

difference between well-known facts and little-known facts. Contingent truths are permissible when the truth in fiction depends on well-known facts. Contingent truths that depend on little-known facts are more problematic. To illustrate the problem clearer, Lewis gives an example from Carl Gans's "How Snakes Move" (as cited in Lewis, 1978) where Holmes solves a crime by discovering that a victim died of a Russell's viper when it climbed up on the victim and choked it. What Gans points out is that a Russell's viper is incapable of concertina movement, which is when a snake climbs up and suffocates its victim. This would then entail that Holmes has not solved *all* of the cases. This example shows that an important aspect of the Sherlock Holmes content has been violated, which is him having solved all of the cases. And therefore, the world of the story is *not* as close to our actual world. Thus, this example shows how Analysis 1 is refuted, since "our world contains no infallible Holmes" (Lewis, 1978: 43).

So far, Lewis's theory of truth in fiction states that there are two things that make up the truth in fiction: firstly, it is the explicit content of the fiction. Secondly, "the background consisting either of the facts about our world (Analysis 1) or of the beliefs overt in the community of origin (Analysis 2)" (Lewis, 1978: 45). Yet, there is one final addition to be made, and that is the carry-over from other truths in fiction. To clarify, he is alluding to intra-fictional and inter-fictional truths. He gives an example from Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* (1979) and says that all of the main characters consist of a treacherous

crew. But towards the end, there is a streetsinger who sings a ballad and leaves, without betraying anyone. The question is, is the streetsinger also a treacherous person? The explicit content doesn't give us this information, nor are people that treacherous in real life. Therefore, those two elements don't guide us. Yet, Lewis thinks we have good reason to say that he is treacherous because all of the characters in the play are treacherous. If we had found out more about the streetsinger, then it would have turned out that he is treacherous like the rest. Thus, Lewis says that "His treacherous nature is an intra-fictional carry-over from the treacherous natures in the story of Macheath, Polly, Tiger Brown, and the rest" (Lewis, 1978: 45).

I must briefly note that Lewis's example from Brecht is a play. What is interesting is that even though he exemplifies a play, Lewis's account tells us something about what's true in the *text*. His theory revolves around prose fiction even when he alludes to theatrical works. This is why I believe he cannot explain cases where the truth in a play is fixed by the performance instead of the text. For example, the truth of a sentence like "Is Macheath tall?" is fixed by the performance. Therefore, Lewis overlooks the performative aspect of theatre.

As an example for inter-fictional carry-over from other fictions, Lewis tells us to imagine him writing a story about Scrulch the dragon. Moreover, let's assume that Lewis never

tells us that this dragon breathes fire. Does he nevertheless breath fire in this story?

Again, Lewis's answer is yes because in stories like that, dragons generally breath fire, even though neither the content of the story nor the actual world overtly indicates this.

Thus, if Scrulch does breathe fire in Lewis's story, "it is by inter-fictional carry-over from what is true of dragons in other stories" (Lewis, 1978: 45). The three elements that Lewis considers to be the determinant of truth in fiction indicate that since we essentially rely on our actual world, we are able to make logical assumptions about the possible worlds.

2.2.1 Objections to Lewis

Having demonstrated Lewis's theory in depth, I shall now present three objections to him. My first objection relates to what the performance contributes to the truth conditions Lewis provides. The problem is that Lewis disregards the performative aspect of theatre. In other words, I believe that performances can contribute something to what's true in the play, but Lewis doesn't seem to give an account of how that can be the case. This is because his theory is concerned with whether the story is told as known fact. Therefore, we can tell what's expressed in the sentences (the script), but what aspects of the play are we supposed to include? It's a difficult question to answer because the performance doesn't consist of sentences. The problem also arises due to Lewis's enactment theory, which asserts that fictional stories must be enacted in possible worlds: "any world where

the story is told as known fact rather than fiction must be among the worlds where the plot of the story is enacted. Else its enactment could be neither known nor truly told of” (Lewis, 1978: 40).

My worry about Lewis’s claim given above is simply that dramatical performances are *already* being enacted in the real world. One distinction is that Lewis uses the term enactment to refer to possible worlds where particular events really do happen, whereas my take on the term enactment alludes to performances. Lewis focuses on written prose works, disregarding theatrical works where there is both a literary and a performative element. In such performances, how can we determine what we can truthfully speak of plays?

Secondly, I believe that it is in theatre’s nature to be intertextual, so why would we even need an account of possible worlds? There are no exclusive versions of a play, and this is what makes it intertextual. In other words, it is not a contingent fact, but rather it is everchanging. Similarly, there are movies grounded from books that are also enacted in the actual world. In the case of theatre, however, the performance is directly available to the audience. From one script, there are innumerable amounts of plays that are already being enacted in the real world. The enactment takes place in the actual world at a specific time. This means that we are already trying out countless variations and

possibilities in the actual world. So then, the question seems to be that why do we need an account of possible worlds if we can already test out these possible scenarios in our actual world? Furthermore, if we tried to apply Lewis's theory to dramatical works, would the performances have to be reenacted in possible worlds or not? Would we have to take the script as the initial source, or the performances of that work? In other words, the question is, would the events and characters *in the script* have to be enacted in a possible world, or would we have to take each individual performance ever performed from one script to be enacted again, with different variations?

Furthermore, if we take a given performance enacted in the real world, would the possible world have to contain different versions of that play? If so, there are already immeasurable numbers of performances that get their basis from a singular script. Would that mean that the possible world would have to contain infinite numbers of those various performances? This relates to the view I had presented in Chapter 1 regarding the work of art. On my account, I argued for a combinational view which asserts that the work of art in drama is a combination of the text and the performance. If all that is needed for a story to be told as known-fact in a possible world is for it to be enacted in that possible world, then it seems illogical that Lewis disregards the obvious fact that plays are written to be performed in the real world for real audiences. There already exists an enactment of the scripts. Not to mention that every director has a different approach in directing a given

play. This entails that in the real world, we are trying to achieve various *possible* productions of the same play. Why should we need the possible world then?

My third worry relates more to adaptations of works of art. Lewis elaborates on how numerous authors have written stories analogous to Doyle's Holmes stories. These stories wouldn't make sense without inter-fictional carry-over. He further states that "Surely many things are true in these satellite stories not because of the explicit content of the satellite story itself, and not because they are part of the background, but rather because they carry over from Conan Doyle's original Holmes stories" (Lewis, 1978: 45). This sounds like Lewis is referring to adaptations of works of literature. Stories about Sherlock Holmes that other authors wrote are inter-fictional because they get their basis from the original Sherlock Holmes stories, the ones that Doyle wrote.

With this line of reasoning, how could we apply this notion to dramatical works? As I've mentioned in my first objection, there are numerous directors who approach a script differently whilst producing the performance. Would this imply that each performance gets its likeness from other performances, or the script? Again, the question I am asking refers to what the work of art in theatre really is. Are the directors supposed to produce their performances based on the script, or can they get inspiration from other performances and add onto *those* performances, rather than merely taking the script as the

basis? The essential question revolves around what precisely makes a performance inter-fictional in cases of theatre. Since each director has a different way of producing the same work, would that imply that they are producing inter-fictional performances each time? Perhaps we would need to think of theatrical performances as adaptations of both the script, and other numerous performances that were produced.

In short, I believe that Lewis's theory of truth in fiction is inapplicable to theatrical works. His scope of fiction contains merely prose fiction, overlooking other forms of fiction where there is both a literary and a performative element. This duality of the theatrical work also complicates what we are to consider the work of art, which in turn renders it difficult what the basis is when we speak of theatrical works. Further issues arise when we consider metatheatrical theatre, which I will be alluding to in the next chapter. When a play acknowledges that it is itself a play, this indicates that there is reality and fiction displayed simultaneously on the stage, which makes it even harder to determine what is true and what is not.

2.3 Applying Lewis's Account to Experimental Theatre

I had mentioned that Lewis's theory of truth in fiction requires three things: 1) The explicit content of the fiction, 2) the background that consists either of the facts regarding

the actual world, or the beliefs overt in the community, 3) carry-over from other truth in fiction (Lewis, 1978: 45). Although Lewis's theory is applicable to prose fiction, it doesn't seem fit for theatrical works since there exists a performative element. However, in this chapter, I shall focus on more experimental forms of theatre. I will demonstrate two worries I have toward Lewis's views. The first one deals with the second of the third proposition of determining truth in fiction with regards to avant-garde theatre. Namely, I explain the difficulty in determining truth in experimental plays in relation to the community's having an overt belief. The second one is concerned with avant-garde plays and Lewis's possible worlds theory.

2.3.1 The Community's Overt Beliefs and Truth

The difficulty at hand arises with regards to Lewis's notion of the author and community's having an overt belief. In his second Analysis, Lewis claims that the truth of a fiction must depend on an overt belief of the community, and the author himself. According to Lewis, a belief in a community is overt if more or less everyone shares it (1978: 44). The proper background is thus based on the overt beliefs of the community in the actual world. This is problematic when the author might not make his intentions with the play clear, and that their private intentions cannot determine the truth in a given fictional work. I believe that this poses some problems for some works of drama where the playwrights and the audience beliefs in the actual world do not matter. In some

works, the author's intentions are untraceable. They simply don't display their intentions neither overtly nor implicitly.

Some examples where instances like these occur are in Eugene Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* (1958), and more importantly Samuel Beckett's *Breath* (1969). None of these plays have a specific content to begin with. Both of Ionesco's plays manipulate language, they revolve around dialogues that are independent of each other, and also nonsensical. *Breath* on the other hand does not even include any dialogues or speech. It is sincerely difficult to understand what the author's or the community's belief is.

Moreover, I believe it is challenging to determine what is true in these plays especially because the characters refute themselves throughout the entire play. To demonstrate, *The Bald Soprano* (1958), begins rather ordinarily in that Mrs. Smith is talking to her husband Mr. Smith, who is reading his newspaper. There isn't anything very unusual about the conversation. However, Mr. Smith reveals that Bobby Watson is dead, and this is where the inconsistencies and absurdities come to surface. They debate when he has died and somehow it is vague as to whether the man has died today, a year and a half ago, two years ago, or three years ago (Ionesco, 1958: 11). Then they bring up Bobby Watson, the widowed wife of Bobby Watson. After talking about the man's death, Mrs. Smith asks "And when do they plan to be married, those two?" (Ionesco, 1958: 12). Next, they

acknowledge his death again, as if they had just not been talking about the couple's upcoming wedding. They talk about how she should remarry, since she is a *childless* widow. But then Mrs. Smith expresses her concerns as to who would take care of Bobby Watson's children, both of whom are also called Bobby Watson.

Dialogues in the play especially get stranger after the Fire Chief mentions the name 'bald soprano' as he's leaving, and the Smiths and the Martins start shouting words and sentences that are nonsensical: "a, e, i, o, u, a, e, i, o, u, a, e, i, o, u, i!" (Ionesco, 1958: 41). None of the four characters listen to each other, and they merely shout irrelevant sentences. Take the following dialogue as another example of absurdity in the play (Ionesco, 1958: 41):

MR. SMITH. It's!

MRS. MARTIN. Not!

MR. MARTIN. That!

MRS. SMITH. Way!

MR. SMITH. It's!

MRS. MARTIN. O!

MR. MARTIN. Ver!

MRS. SMITH. Here!

As a second example, Beckett's *Breath* (1969) also shares similarity with *The Bald Soprano* in that there is no specific content in the play. In fact, this play is even more absurd than the former due to its one-minute performance length and lack of characters and plot. The play begins with a faint light on a littered stage, and displays a faint cry, followed by a loud breath, and finally silence and darkness. These types of plays are what Wildman calls "empty fictions" where the fiction contains no content, and is wholly incomplete (Wildman, 2019: 35). I think I have proved my point in questioning Lewis's notion that there have to be overt beliefs by the audience and the author of the work.

Indeed, in regular plays, there are some truths expressed within the plays, but when plays like *The Bald Soprano* are taken into account, we see that there is a lack of content, dialogue, plot, and an absence in a fixed character identity in the play. In plays like *Breath*, there isn't even a character or plot. The author's intention is simply not given, whether this be implicit or explicit. In contrast, let's take Shakespeare's *King Lear* (2000) as a different example. The play conveys important (and overt) themes and messages such as justice, family reliability, making peace, etc. We can assuredly say that with this play, Shakespeare intended to convey particular messages to the audience. Thus, he has made his intentions explicit.

2.3.2 Avant-Garde Cases and Lewis's Possible Worlds Theory

Lewis's theory asserts that the actual world cannot contain inconsistencies, and that the story in the actual world has to be told as known fact in a possible world, which entails that those possible worlds cannot be inconsistent either. Yet what happens when the fiction itself contains inconsistencies? It's crucial for me to distinguish different variations of inconsistencies. Lewis uses this term because he takes prose fiction as his scope. It is easier to have an inconsistent prose fiction than it is to have an inconsistent work of theatre. Namely, the script can have inconsistencies but the performance can't⁷. The other terms which I will be using are 'absurdity' and 'incoherency'. Absurdities are things on the stage that one cannot make sense of because the events are weird. Incoherencies are worse than absurdities because one cannot tell a coherent story of what's going on the stage.

For example, Ionesco has constructed his play in such a way that he deliberately doesn't create a consistent whole. He purposefully prevents the viewers' ability to make sense of the play (both logically and contextually). If indeed the play itself is absurd and incoherent, then Lewis's theory won't work because in possible worlds, everything has to be consistent. Indeed, every fictional work contains various levels of inconsistencies,

⁷ The reason for this is that inconsistencies refer to cases where P is true, and simultaneously not true.

however, Ionesco's work contains very frequent and extended ones of absurdities and incoherencies. More importantly, Ionesco's usage of incoherencies evidently prevents the work from establishing a set content. The incoherencies throughout the play are so frequent that even if we supposedly dissect the entire script into pieces, they will not contain enough detail to transmit into the possible world. If we take each fragments containing truthful statements, then how could be apply these to the possible world of that fiction? Let us proceed in conducting this experiment. The following statements are the coherent and true propositions about *The Bald Soprano* (1958): The Smiths are a couple who are sitting in their living room. They have a maid named Mary, who announces that the Martins have arrived. The Martins (eventually conclude that they) are a married couple. Mrs. Martin tells a story about a man tying his shoe. The Fire Chief arrives, tells the two couples some stories, and then leaves. These are approximately the only definite truths in the play.

The incoherencies and absurdities, on the other hand, are too excessive to exemplify in the way I have illustrated just now. But some examples include the content of the stories that the Fire Chief tells. For instance, he begins the story of "The Dog and the Cow": "Once upon a time another cow asked another dog: 'Why have you not swallowed your trunk?' 'Pardon me,' replied the dog, 'it is because I thought that I was an elephant.'" (Ionesco, 1958: 30). And even the mystery of what happens to the Smiths at the end of

the play is incoherent. The lights cease while both couples scream in each other's ears, and when the lights come back up, Ionesco describes how only the Martins are on the stage now, and that they cite the same lines as the Smiths had said at the beginning of the play.

It is because of incoherencies like the ones I have just exemplified above that Lewis's theory doesn't necessarily work for theatrical works that contain this many incoherencies and absurdities. His theory has strategies that can deal with ordinarily inconsistent fictions, such as the ones in Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series. As I've mentioned in Chapter 1, he exemplifies how in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" a murder is solved when a Russell's viper climbs up a bell rope and kills a victim. However, Carl Gans argues that this particular kind of snake does not in fact have the ability to climb objects (as cited in Lewis, 1978: 43). Lewis argues that this specific truth in the fiction is a contingent fact that is not well known. Therefore, it is a little-known fact which the majority of the people do not know (Lewis, 1978: 43). However, this strategy doesn't seem to apply to the cases like empty fictions, incomplete fictions, Absurdist plays, or avant-garde theatrical works. In short, even if we did dissect the story into fragments that only contain truth, the story is nevertheless incomplete, and therefore cannot be transmitted to possible worlds.

The distinction I have made between inconsistencies, absurdities, and incoherencies poses two problems for Lewis. For one, if a play contains absurdities and incoherencies like in the case of Ionesco, then how is the audience expected to identify the background facts? Due to the extent of incoherencies in *The Bald Soprano*, it is difficult for the audience to determine what kinds of background beliefs they are supposed to add onto the content. Secondly, the amount of incoherencies render it difficult to identify the closest possible worlds.

One point I must notify is that I believe that there are different kinds of ways to name the absurd and incoherent situations here. What I mean is, the circumstance where almost everyone is named Bobby Watson can be an example of an absurdity. Or the scene where Mr. and Mrs. Martin arrive together but act like they are strangers to each other is also a strange incident. I think that these kinds of absurdities might be compatible with the overt beliefs of the community in the world of the fiction in the sense that it is conceivable that these kinds of absurdities may happen in the real world. However, the fact that the play consists of these kinds of absurd cases in its entirety is what makes it almost impossible to determine what is true in the play. Indeed, the bell rings when the Fire Chief arrives, but there is such a confusing dispute as to how many times the bell rang, or Mrs. Martin argues that “each time the doorbell rings there is never anyone there” (Ionesco, 1958: 25). Therefore, the fact that the play contains absurdities is not what makes it impossible to

convey into the possible world but rather that the inconsistencies in Ionesco's play override the coherent bits.

It may seem like Ionesco's play may not pose a clear problem for Lewis because we can imagine there must be some possible world in which the things that happen on the stage in *The Bald Soprano*, in some sense, happen. Most things that happen on a stage could have happened not on a stage. Some people sitting in a room may have uttered those words. In this sense, it might seem that the play doesn't pose a problem for Lewis. But I think it still does because even if the events on the stage could have happened in a possible world, it is still difficult to determine which possible world in particular is the closest to our world. Lewis can't give an account for this and I think that is a problem.

CHAPTER 3

WALTON'S IMAGINATION-BASED ACCOUNT

Unlike Lewis, Kendall Walton acknowledges the performative aspect of theatre. In fact, the performance is an important part of his theory because it is supposed to function as a prop for the audience to engage with the make-believe world of the play. In this section, I shall initially introduce Walton's account of truth in fiction, where he holds an imagination-based account and argues that fictional truths are generated by the generation of truths. Although Walton recognizes the importance of performances, I essentially argue that he cannot cope well with experimental theatre. I present three objections where I first question the applicability of his imagination-based account to Absurdist plays. Next, I raise an objection to his theory of the generation of truths. Finally, it seems that his theory of props become confusing for metatheatrical cases.

3.1 Walton's Account of Truth in Fiction

Lewis and Walton's accounts are largely compatible in respect to their theories on how fictional truths are generated. As I've mentioned, Lewis's third element that contributes

to determining fictional truths was by means of inter-fictional and intra-fictional truths. Quite similarly, Walton (1990) argues that fictional truths are generated either directly or indirectly. Yet, the two philosophers do differ in that Lewis's notion of truth is theorized around a broader definition of fiction (prose works), whereas Walton directs his focus onto a smaller scale, namely truth in representational art. Thus, their difference lies in the scope of the fiction they focus on. Another difference is that Walton dwells greatly on what it is to produce a fiction, and what its nature is. But Lewis doesn't provide the reader with this information, he merely gives an account of how we can understand fictional truths in written prose. As I will illustrate in greater depth below, Walton's account of truth is that there are not any rules about determining truths. Instead, there are facts. It is in this respect that Walton's theory is an improvement of Lewis's.

I've taken Walton as one of the philosophers who deals with truth in fiction because adds onto Lewis's theory in that he argues (quite similar to Lewis) that truths are generated either directly or indirectly. I've mentioned that Lewis disregards the performative aspect of theatre, but Walton fills this gap. Moreover, similar to Morris, Walton also deals with questions regarding how we can talk about fictional entities when we know they don't exist. However, his account lacks more depth than Morris's, so I've chosen to examine his stance in this particular ordering.

The most salient argument that Walton makes in his *Mimesis as Make-Believe* is that in order to understand plays, novels, and paintings, we first need to examine dolls, cars, and hobbyhorses. And the reason why he examines props in children's games is because "the activities in which representational works of art are embedded and which give them their point are best seen as continuous with children's games of make-believe" (Walton, 1990: 11). Just as dolls and cars function as props in children's games of make-believe, Walton argues that representational works function as props in games of make-believe.

Walton states that "Representations generate fictional truths by virtue of their features [...] in accordance with applicable principles of generation" (Walton, 1990: 138). These features are the marks on the surface of the painting, or the words of a novel, which quite resembles Morris's notion of the 'medium'. Walton argues that there is no systematic way of understanding how fictional truths are generated because the way they emerge is complex and subtle (1990: 139). Regarding his theory on truth in fiction, Walton says that fictional truths can be generated either directly or indirectly, where directly corresponds with the term "primary", and indirectly corresponds to "implied" (Walton, 1990: 140). Indirectly generated fictional truths are truths that depend on other fictional truths, whereas direct fictional truths don't (Walton, 1990: 144). I believe these two terms share resemblance with Lewis's notion of inter-fictional and intra-fictional truths because sometimes we assume that there is a further truth in a given fiction based on the world of

that fiction. For instance, Walton gives an example from Goya's *No Se Puede Mirar* painting where we assume that there are soldiers holding a gun toward victims, even if we don't see the soldiers in the frame (1990: 140). It is fictional that the man in Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* has a job, a mother, a son, or friends. Walton explains this by saying that these assumptions are implied "in the absence of contrary indications, by the fact that fictionally they are human beings" (Walton, 1990: 142).

If there is no systematic way of understanding how fictional truths are generated, and if different fictional truths are generated in various manners, then does this mean that we shouldn't ground anything on theories of fiction? Walton's response is no. Even though fictional truths are generated in various ways, the outcome remains the same in every case. That is, they are "propositions to be imagined" (Walton, 1990: 185). What this means is that fictionality consists in prescriptions to imagine. Indeed, we oftentimes base our judgments on the outside world, but this doesn't entail that we have learned the rules for the particular device by which fictional truths are generated (Walton, 1990: 186). All in all, the principle of generation is not what defines fictionality, and it is not the case that we recognize fictional things via learning the relevant principles. Instead, the principles are "reconstructions of our judgments about what is fictional than guides for making them" (Walton, 1990: 185).

3.1.1 An Objection to Walton

My worry related to the principles of generation argument is related to how Walton's account of direct and indirect fictional truths can be implemented to theatrical performances. I believe that every performance is unique in its own way. The uniqueness sometimes derives from the fact that a performance might be interrupted by an audience member, causing the actors to break character and perhaps say something that the character might usually not say. Even simply claiming that every performance is unique because each performance casts different types of people will be sufficient to prove my point. For example, productions of Shakespeare's *King Lear* conventionally cast old white men for the part of King Lear. However, there are cases where the part is given to an actor that does not conform to those conventions. Notably, Glenda Jackson, a woman, took up the role in 2019. How is a person watching Glenda Jackson perform on stage as a *woman* impersonating a King supposed to make an allegedly true statement as simple as "King Lear decides to divide the kingdom between *his* daughters"? Such cases pose problems for Walton because the audience is going to imagine different things from what they would have imagined if the role was cast more conventionally. If Glenda is playing Lear and it's obvious that she's a woman, are we to say that Lear is a woman? It's difficult to identify truth when the character on stage is different from the character in the script.

I must note that the question of an actor's gender, race, ethnicity and the like are not necessarily a problem in the usual sense, but rather that it complicates how we can form true statements about a given fiction if the person on stage who is personifying a character does not conform to the script. What my point is, indirectly generated fictional truths don't make sense in cases of theatrical works where the gender of the actor is different from the gender of the character. This is related to the problem I had illustrated in Chapter 1 about what the work of art in theatre is. Given that we think that the performance is part of the work of art, and given that the performance can determine truth conditions, the Glenda example still poses problems for Walton. Thus, it seems challenging to adopt Walton's notion of directly and indirectly generated fictional truths to theatrical works. Nevertheless, cases of avant-garde theatre raise much bigger issues for Walton.

3.2 Applying Walton's Account to Experimental Theatre

I had mentioned in the previous chapter that Walton places great importance to imagination in his theory of props. He says that games of make-believe "are exercises of the imagination involving props" (Walton, 1990: 12). I have three main worries regarding Walton's account. I shall first criticize his theory of how fictional truths are generated. Later, I will question what counts as a prop in theatrical works. Finally, I will revisit the

Bobby Watson example in Ionesco's play to illustrate the difficulty of applying Walton's theory of imagination.

3.2.1 Objection Regarding Walton's Imagination Theory

Imagination plays a great role in Walton's theory of make-believe games. On his account, imagination is the prerequisite for engaging in make-believe games. I had previously illustrated the Bobby Watson example from Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* (1958). The Smiths talk about this character's wife, child, and relatives, whom are also named Bobby Watson. More importantly, they shift to a discussion on his wife named Bobby Watson who is both a widowed, yet married woman, and is also childless yet simultaneously has two children. The issue for Walton would be that the audience or readers cannot logically grasp the concept of a person who has all of these traits simultaneously. If imagination is a necessity for people to engage in make-believe games, then how can we give an account of imagination for *The Bald Soprano*? In other words, absurdist and metatheatrical plays would pose a problem for Walton since the audience doesn't know what to imagine.

3.2.2 Objection Regarding the Generation of Truths

Walton argues that fictional truths can be generated either directly or indirectly, where directly corresponds with the term “primary”, and indirectly corresponds to “implied” (Walton, 1990: 140). Indirectly generated fictional truths are truths that depend on other fictional truths, whereas direct fictional truths don’t (Walton, 1990: 144). This shares similarity with Lewis’s notion of intra and inter-fiction. The question is, how can we apply Walton’s theory of truth to metatheatrical works? In a production directed by Karel Reisz of *Act Without Words* (1965), there are whistles that guide the character to use certain objects in order to obtain tools. For instance, a whistle comes from the left side of the stage to guide the character into seeing a cube brought by ropes, which is later useful when the whistle is heard again to draw attention to a glass of water descending from above. When the whistle guides the character in this manner, it is hard to imagine where the sounds are actually coming from. In the story of the play, the character is situated in a desert, but there are whistles coming from all around the world of the play. At the same time, the audience experiences these as real whistles as well. In this case, the distinction between reality and fiction is blurred. Can an audience member try to *imagine* that these are unreal whistles, or should they perceive them as something real? If the latter, then the situation is absurd because the world of the fiction provides sounds of whistles that cannot in actuality have the function to guide as done in the play. To refer back to the

direct and indirectly generated truths, how is it possible to fully assume that the world of the play uses real ropes to bring objects from the sky?

3.2.3 Objection Regarding the Theory of Props

Another point about Beckett's play is that Walton's main argument is that we use works of art as props in order to engage in the make-believe world (1990: 11). Just as children use toy cars as props in order to engage in a game of car racing, we use art to engage with the make-believe. In cases of theatre, there are, in the most literal sense, props. That is, there are stage props ranging from chairs, tables, ropes, painted background scenery, etc. My query is that in metatheatrical plays, it is a bit confusing for the audience when these props are used *literally* in both the stage and off-stage. In other words, the prop that was supposed to serve the world of the fiction is also used quite straightforwardly in the world of the audience. This, in turn, disrupts what the audience should imagine that prop as. For example, are we supposed to imagine that the rope that brings the tree into a desert is a magical realist kind of rope, or do we take it as a mere prop?

CHAPTER 4

MORRIS'S REAL LIKENESSES ACCOUNT

Having concluded that neither Lewis's nor Walton's account of truth in fiction are applicable to theatrical works, I shall now return to Michael Morris's account. I will begin by introducing Morris's Non-Distraction Thesis and real-likenesses account in depth. I will next illustrate the importance of the Non-Distraction Thesis in novels. This is crucial to understanding how Morris uses theatre as part of his theory. Afterward, I shall examine a possible objection toward the Non-Distraction Thesis, followed by my solution to it. I defend the Non-Distraction Thesis in a way that Morris can't, simply because he doesn't address the medium for theatre. Finally, I shall illustrate how his view is unsatisfactory on other grounds by presenting two other objections that I believe are insoluble by Morris. At heart, these objections are concerned with what Morris would have said about different kinds of theatre. Even though Morris's account lacks depth for theatrical works, it still comes closest in giving a satisfactory account of truth in theatre.

4.1 Morris's Real Likenesses Account

I have saved Morris's account for last not only because his theory is the most recent one, but also because he has managed to incorporate both Lewis and Walton's views. His account is a cumulation of the other two philosophers. He adds onto Lewis's theories regarding truth in fiction, and also by addressing narratives further in depth. I had mentioned that Lewis deals mainly with prose fiction, and that he requires that there be either an implicit or explicit narrator. Morris takes this further and questions how the medium in prose fiction, which is the words on the text, can resemble the real thing of its kind (Morris, 2020: 175).

Likewise, Morris improves Walton's theory in that both of their scopes of fiction are representational art. Also, both provide a specific account on what kind of language is used in written fictions. Morris clearly argues that the language used in novels are non-transactional, meaning the reader is encouraged to read the words on the text and speak them for themselves (2020: 195). Contrarily, Walton says that there are cases where written works sometimes assert things. For example, there are didactic fictions which promote propaganda, instructing, or advertising (Walton, 1990: 78). More importantly, it is by Morris's brief remarks on theatrical works that binds his view to the former authors. I will now explain his views briefly.

Morris's notion of truth in fiction also relies on representational works of art and ontological inquiries. In his *Real Likenesses* (2020), he argues that real likenesses really exist, in a way. He centers his theory around the fields of paintings, photography, and novels. The focal question he asks throughout the book is related to how we are able to talk about things that don't exist, which is the same question that Lewis and Walton raise about truth in works of fiction. For instance, Morris says that we describe a woman in a painting as having round eyes, red lips, and rosy cheeks, yet we are simultaneously aware that there is no face there, and that it is made of paint (2020: 7-8). Morris presents paradoxes of the same kind to the aforementioned three fields of representational art. His aim is to solve these paradoxes by using the Non-Distraction Thesis. This thesis asserts that "attending to the medium cannot inevitably be a distraction from attending to the content, or vice versa" (Morris, 2020: 2). The problem is to give a tenable account of the relation between medium and content. As a solution to this issue, Morris puts forth the Real-Likeness view, which asserts that "A real likeness is something which really exists, which is worked in the representational medium, which resembles what's depicted, and in virtue of that resemblance counts as, in a way, the same kind of thing as what's depicted" (Morris, 2020: 1).

The Non-Distraction Thesis asserts that attending to the medium of a work of art cannot inevitably be a distraction from attending to the content. The medium of a

representational work is whatever the artist manipulates in order to produce the work of art (Morris, 2020: 22). In paintings, the medium is the paintbrush, canvas, fingers, etc. In novels, the artist manipulates language (or words) to produce the work of art (Morris, 2020: 160). The content, on the other hand, is what we see in the work of art. My aim in this chapter is to question whether Morris's Non-Distraction Thesis applies to theatrical works. In order to ask this, however, I had to define what the medium is in theatre, which I have addressed in Chapter 1.

But how does all of this relate to the notion of truth in fiction, or in my case drama?

Questions regarding truth in fiction generally revolve around questions like the following: Does Rosalind⁸ have a mother? Although this information is not alluded to in the play, the readers *suppose* that she indeed *does* (or at least *did*) have a mother. The basis of our assumption lies in the actual world, wherein every human must be birthed from their mother. Nevertheless, it's a difficult question to answer assuredly and in a flash since it is a paradoxical question: "If Rosalind doesn't exist, then how can she have a mother?". It is this very notion of the paradox that ties Morris's Non-Distraction Thesis to my thesis. He presents paradoxes to each of the three forms of art. As I've mentioned before, in cases of faces in paintings, the paradox is as follows (Morris, 2020, 8):

⁸ The protagonist in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1919).

(C1) (i) That's a face; and (ii) that's not a real face;

(C2) (i) That's a face; and (ii) that's worked in paint

Thus, the paradox is that 1) there is no real face there, and 2) it's made of paint (or photographed, or made up by the author). The Non-Distraction Thesis helps us get a grip on what we see in the painting/photograph/novel. It does this by bringing the question of content and medium together, and shows that attending to one can help us understand the other. Thus, they are not a distraction from each other. Ultimately, Morris argues that the paradoxes are resolved with the Non-Distraction Thesis in representational art. Now, I will present what Morris has to say about written works of representational art, specifically novels.

4.2 Morris's Views on Novels

Amongst the many examples of forms of representational art, the one that I'm most interested in is where Morris examines paradoxes in fiction. His examination of novels is of my focal interest because Morris seems to use works of drama as the backbone of this theory of real likenesses in novels. He raises a paradox for novels where he questions how one can be moved by Anna Karenina's fate when we are well aware that she is not a real person, and that everything about her is written. The Non-Distraction Thesis in novels is formulated as "attending to the way a novel is written can't inevitably be a

distraction from attending to the people and events which appear in it” (Morris, 2020: 160). What is intriguing about the Non-Distraction Thesis in novels is that it is something that is worked in words, yet it resembles the real thing of its kind. In other forms of art, real likenesses are things taken to be produced by the medium. For example, a sculpted head is a head worked in stone.

However, the chief question here is how words in a novel, which is the medium, can produce a real-likeness. Morris answers this question by arguing that the language used in novels are non-transactional, meaning the reader is encouraged to speak the words *for* themselves and *to* themselves (2020: 182). When the readers read that Descartes is “sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands”, and that he concludes “I am, therefore I exist”, he is inviting the reader to imagine that they are in that situation (as cited in Morris, 2020: 180-82). Morris says that “we take the words as a script, and find ourselves playing the part which they lay out” (2020: 181). What is done with the words by the speaker involves the words themselves that are on the page. Thus, attending to what is being done is not a distraction from attending to the words (Morris, 2020: 182). Thus, non-transactional languages used in novels conform to the Non-Distraction Thesis. We take the Descartes case to resemble play scripts because whenever he says “I”, we imagine that it is *us* who is saying the “I”.

4.3 Morris on Theatre

Morris also briefly alludes to theatre. Similar to the question asked for novels, Morris questions what role Shakespeare's words play in creating an audible and visible Venetian general (Othello). His answer to this query is that the only thing that makes Shakespeare's Othello audible and visible on stage is the fact that somebody *uttered* the words on the script (Morris, 2020: 186). So, the performance is what brings the characters to life. In the case of novels, Morris seems to suggest that reading the words on the page is what makes the character alive (2020: 195). Similarly, in theatrical cases, the words don't do anything on their own: "the actor has to speak them with a certain kind of understanding" (Morris, 2020: 186). This kind of understanding is formed when the actor speaks the words on the text as words spoken by a Venetian general, *not* as words spoken by a real Venetian general (Morris, 2020: 186). That is, the actor must speak the words by a literary (theatrical) Venetian general. This notion of having to read the script out loud closely resembles Lewis's enactment theory where the plot of a story must be enacted in any world where the story is told as known fact (Lewis, 1978: 40). In addition, however, Morris says that the actor must act well for Othello to become visible and audible. More importantly, Shakespeare has to have written the character well for it to resemble a real man (Morris, 1990: 183). Morris claims to have created a parallel between theatre and the painted face analogy, since the audience can point from their seats in the theatre and say (Morris, 2020, 184):

(Cp1) (i) That's⁹ a person; and (ii) that's not a real person;

(Cp2) (i) That's a person; and (ii) that's just something created with the script

Just as it was crucial to identify what the medium of paintings are in order to be able to characterize the resemblance between a real face and a painted face, Morris says we must likewise characterize what the medium is for theatre. That is, we need to explain the resemblance between the visible and audible character in 1943, and a real Venetian general by identifying what the medium is for an English verse play. However, Morris does not seem to ever actually explain what this medium is for theatre. He merely assumes that “there is no difficulty in making sense of the resemblance” between the visible character on stage and a real Venetian general (Morris, 2020: 186).

As I had mentioned previously, Morris applies the Non-Distraction Thesis to three types of art: Paintings, photography, and novels. To begin with, Morris argues that novels and plays use non-transactional language. Non-transactional language is used for reading the words on the text *for* ourselves, and *to* ourselves. When reading Descartes's statement “I am, I exist”, Descartes is not informing the reader that he exists, but rather when we read the text, we confirm to *ourselves* that “I am, I exist” by using non-transactional language

⁹The term “that” refers to the character, not the actor.

(Morris, 2020, 182). The relation between written and dramatical works for Morris is that we accept the words on the text as a script, and we engage with it by playing the part.

Morris says that examining the characters in plays might help us to understand how creatures in written fiction really exist and resemble real people without actually being real people. In theatre, the characters speak the words of the play transactionally¹⁰, whereas the author and actors use it non-transactionally. Morris provides an example from Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603) by questioning how the Othello in Shakespeare's text could actually resemble a real Venetian general. Shakespeare's Othello speaks in iambic pentameters and blank verse. When we read these words, we don't think that Shakespeare's Othello is a real soldier, yet "if Shakespeare is any good, his Othello does resemble a real soldier" (Morris, 2020: 183). How can this be? Morris's explanation is that *Othello* is a script written for a play, and so it is only in performance that the character Othello comes to life. During the performance, the actor takes up that character's role and speaks the words for himself. If this actor gives a good performance, then they will have made Shakespeare's Othello visible and audible (Morris, 2020, 183).

¹⁰ Transactional language, as opposed to non-transactional language, is used to inform people, get them to do things, etc. (Morris, 2020: 179). In other words, the language has a specific purpose. The reason why characters in plays use transactional language is because they get other characters to do things, or they inform other characters.

In other words, with the condition that the actor and author carry their parts out well, the Othello that the actor presents on stage will resemble a real man.

The actor isn't obligated to pretend or make-believe that he is a real Venetian general (nor an unreal one). Yet, the question still remains: What role do the words in the script play in creating an audible and visible character on stage? Morris's account is that it is only when the words of Shakespeare's script are spoken that Shakespeare's Othello is made audible and visible on stage (2020: 186). It is crucial that the actor speaks the words on the script with a certain understanding. The actor must speak the words of Shakespeare's script as words spoken by a *theatrical* or literary Venetian general, not as words spoken by a *real* Venetian general.

What distinguishes written works from theatrical ones is the performative aspect. To elaborate, Morris argues that plays are intended to be performed whereas novels are not (2020: 195). When an actor reads the words aloud while performing, he has many choices. These choices include how to deliver the speech in terms of tone, pronunciation, and emphasis on vowel sounds. Reading the text aloud opens doors for the actor to understand what their choices are (tone, pronunciation). Morris's proposal is that "when we say that the Othello in the text resembles a real Venetian general, all we need mean is

that any intelligent, understanding speaking of and acting with those words will produce something which resembles a real Venetian general” (Morris, 2020: 189).

Morris applies the Non-Distraction Thesis to theatrical works by saying that because the character is really there in the performance, seeing or hearing that character doesn't necessarily make us distracted from the actor's performance. Likewise, “attending to the actor's performance need be no distraction from the character” (Morris, 2020: 190). This entails the notion that the character comes to life only in performance, and so he only exists in the text (in the potential). Hearing someone speak these words in real life (like in a stage performance or an audiobook) makes the character resemble a real person because it's an actual person speaking these words (Morris, 2020: 194). Hence, Morris argues that a similar account is applicable to novels. A reader of a novel may not read the words aloud, or may not act them out but the effect is the same when compared to theatre. Morris's views on novels illustrates how theatre is the backbone of his theory.

4.4 Objection to the Non-Distraction Thesis

I shall now illustrate my thoughts on Morris's application of the Non-Distraction Thesis to dramatical works. This application is done in the following way (Morris, 2020: 190):

The character is really there in that performance. And because it is in the performance that the character is really there, seeing it and hearing it does not

require us to be distracted from the actor's performance; and similarly, attending to the actor's performance need be no distraction from the character.

The problem I see with this view is that Morris takes *only* the actor-character relation to be a part of the content and medium. In other words, he says that we cannot understand the resemblance between a character who's audible and visible on stage in 1943, and a real Venetian general unless we understand the medium of an English verse play (Morris, 2020, 186). However, he doesn't elaborate on what the medium is. And because he doesn't consider other forms of medium, it renders difficult in answering questions regarding the whistle and the rope in Beckett's *Act Without Words* (1965). Should we focus on the rope as if it belongs to the world of the play, or to the world of the audience? It is inevitable to see the rope as both a prop used for the stage and a sort of magical realist element that brings the actor a glass of water from the sky.

Having said this, the issues in Morris's account are far more complicated than that of Lewis and Walton's because it is difficult to even identify what the work of art is on Morris's account. He deliberates on the Non-Distraction Thesis, wherein the medium cannot inevitably be a distraction from the content, and vice versa. In order to examine this thesis for theatre, I had to give an account of what the work of art is in Chapter 1 which encapsulates both the script and the performance. Then, I had to address who the artist is in theatrical works where I have created a hierarchy of authors. Finally, I gave a characterization of what the medium for theatrical works is. What exactly is being

manipulated in order to produce the work of art? Morris merely takes the actor and character into account, and I find this quite insufficient. Giving an account for these questions is important in deciding whether the Non-Distraction Thesis applies to theatre or not. Moreover, it is almost impossible to identify truth so far as these questions remain insoluble.

4.5 Defending the Non-Distraction Thesis

The objection I have presented above is a resolvable one, and this is what I shall do now. The reason why the Non-Distraction Thesis is interesting for me is because I simply wonder if the thesis holds for theatrical productions. Throughout the book, Morris illustrates how the Non-Distraction Thesis applies differently to each art form. Alongside this, it is evident that the medium changes for each art form too. I question this for cases of theatrical productions. In this chapter, my aim was to examine whether the Non-Distraction Thesis can be adapted to drama. In order to do this, however, the medium of drama had to be defined. As I have argued in Chapter 1, I think that the medium of drama includes; the text, performance, actors, the stage, props, any immediate crew member (costume, makeup, lighting, prompter, stagehands, etc.), the audience itself, and other backstage crew members. This shows how complicated determining the medium for theatre is. But even if we took my account of the medium to be true, would the Non-Distraction Thesis still hold? In the case of paintings, the non-distraction thesis says that

one can be interested in the content of a painting by using the medium, and vice versa. In other words, admiring the brushstrokes is not a distraction from appreciating the content. How could this be applied to drama? Let's again refer back to the King Lear example from earlier: there's a scene in the play where Lear is out in the storm, cursing the weather. While watching this scene, one might pay close attention to his speech (the way he talks), his facial expressions, makeup, and costume. Yet, would it be a major problem if King Lear was played by, let's say, a black man, or a thin teenager, or even a woman? Hamilton alludes to this problem in his "The Text-Performance Relation in Theatre" (2009). He says that although information about a character's ethnicity, race, weight, and height may not be a major problem in the script, it may pose problems for the performance (Hamilton, 2009: 617). Similarly, it is known that in Shakespeare's time, some female roles were carried out by men. The question is, was this a *distraction* from the play's content in Shakespeare's time?

I believe the answer is no. Just because the actor is black, thin, plump, or female, these are nevertheless not a major distraction. It is of course natural for the audience to experience the brief shock of encountering the character to be different. Yet, these factors would not seem to bother the audience *throughout* the whole play. Similarly, the person in charge of lighting may be considered as playing a factor for distracting the audience from the content. One might say that they do not play a significant role in contributing to the subject matter of the play. Yet I believe they are essential because they add creativity

to the play. For one, lighting represents the mood of the characters. Thus, strategically directing the lights will contribute to the content. Having said this, it seems like Morris's Non-Distraction Thesis and concept of medium is not a problem for theatrical works. Just because Lear was played by a black actor, it doesn't mean that this is the *only* thing the audience focuses on throughout the play.

4.6 Further Objections to the Real Likenesses View

4.6.1 Objection Regarding the Actor-Character Relationship

Let me begin with the first worry. I had mentioned above that in Morris's terms, the actor can (but not necessarily) pretend to be the character, but not the real person (real kind) of that character. He pretends to be a theatrical and literary Othello. The reasoning behind Morris's argument was that because Othello speaks in iambic pentameters and blank verses, it is hard to imagine a real Venetian general speaking this way. I think this is a reasonable argument. However, what about more naturalistic plays? By this I mean plays where the dialogues are natural, non-poetic, and consistent. For example, would Morris's theory apply to any of the characters in John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1968)? The characters in that play don't speak in iambic pentameters nor in blank verse. They display very sarcastic yet natural dialogues. Perhaps a play like this might be problematic for Morris's account of the actor pretending to be the character. In the Othello case, it was difficult to imagine a real Venetian general speak the way the fictional Othello does. But

in Osborne's play, it is not so hard to conceive that the characters could actually correspond to real people.

But what to make of avant-garde cases, like Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*? Especially towards the end of the play, all of the characters start to speak disconnectedly from one another, from themselves, and from the play. On one hand, it is conceivable that a *real* Mrs. Smith might speak that nonsensical, but on the other hand, the entire play is so incoherent that it is not very convincing to say that a real Mrs. Smith might act this way. I am closer to the latter stance. So then, would Morris argue that the actress *can* pretend to be a real Mrs. Smith, or should she simply pretend to be the character? I think he would say the actress has to pretend to be the character, rather than the real kind, since pretending to be a real Mrs. Smith would be like pretending to be a silly (or even a psychotic) person. Having said this, it seems like Morris would treat Ionesco's play the same way as Shakespeare's play, even though the former is an example of Absurdist Theatre. Interestingly, it seems like non-absurdist plays would be more problematic for Morris.

There then remains one final theatrical case: Metatheatre. Beckett's *Act Without Words* (1965) is an interesting example of metatheatre because the actor doesn't speak at all in the play. Instead, the metatheatricality derives from the stage itself, and the world of the

play. For instance, the play opens with the character finding himself in a desert. He constantly falls, gets back up, dusts himself off. And then he hears a whistle from the right wing. The whistle guides the character throughout the entire play in order to get him to do something. For example, a tree descends from flies, and the character is aware of this only after the whistle blows from above (Beckett: 87). Likewise, the flies bring a carafe, the whistle blows from its direction, and the character is thus aware of it. The fact that a whistle is heard from all around the theatre is, I think, quite a metatheatrical element. It is heard by both the audience and the character, but the character is in a desert. The play displays even more metatheatrical elements in Karel Reisz's production of the play. There, the objects (carafe, cubes, scissors, etc.) are all brought onto the stage via a rope from above, rather than the flies. This further blurs the difference between stage and reality. How then, are we to expect an actor to imagine being that person? Since the play is metatheatrical, the character also seems like an actor simultaneously. Should he act out the stage directions *for* and *to* himself, or should he try to deliver a message to the audience?

4.6.2 Objection Regarding Non-Transactional Language

Another point I have regarding Morris's notion that the actor's job doesn't necessarily involve him to imagine or pretend to be a real Venetian general is that this seems closely related to identifying with a character's mental states. And this in turn, is relevant to non-

transactional usage of language. What I mean is, Morris finds the Othello example problematic because of the characters' unrealistic speech. The actor pretends to be the character. That is, the literary Othello who is described in the script. Morris says that imagining being that person means you speak for yourself when you read "I think, I am". This is non-transactional language. Yet, if you cannot imagine being that person, then does this mean you are speaking transactionally? Morris argues that characters speak the words of the script transactionally (since they get other characters to do things, or inform them), whereas the actors and scriptwriter use the language non-transactionally (2020: 183). So then, what happens in the case of Beckett where there is metatheatricality? Do the actors use transactional or non-transactional language? In Beckett's *Endgame* (1958), Clov breaks the fourth wall when he looks at the audience with a telescope. Hamm tells Clov to check the world outside and Clov looks directly at the audience with a telescope and replies "Zero" (Beckett, 1958: 4). Is the actor using the word "Zero" transactionally or non-transactionally?

In short, my aim in the last two objections was to show that Morris's account doesn't apply to naturalistic plays. By giving an example from Shakespeare, he is indicating that the language the author uses for his characters is poetic. Namely, Othello speaks in iambic pentameters and blank verses. This is not a quality native to naturalistic plays. On the other hand, I've tried to illustrate what Morris might say to both naturalistic plays

(where the language is colloquial and non-poetic), and metatheatrical plays (where there are sometimes no words used). I have thus concluded that Morris's theory is inapplicable to naturalistic and metatheatrical plays.



CONCLUSION

I have thus argued that the three accounts of truth in fiction are inapplicable to theatrical works of art. Defining truth in theatre is difficult in that the work contains a literary element as well as a performative element. David Lewis disregards the performative aspect of theatre, and reduces theatrical works merely to the script. On the whole, the truth conditions he offers, and his theory of possible worlds are not quite fit for theatrical cases. Kendall Walton, on the other hand, acknowledges the performative aspect of theatre because his account suggests that performances are supposed to be used as props to imagine what's going on. However, avant-garde and metatheatrical cases pose a problem for Walton because the audience don't quite know what to imagine.

Thus, I moved onto a more recent theory where Michael Morris questions what it really means for a fictional entity to exist. Although his Non-Distraction Thesis is defensible, I conclude that Morris cannot give a complete account of truth in theatre because his characterization of the medium is inapplicable to theatrical works.

Overall, examining truth in theatre is an important matter because it draws attention to the fact that there are performative works of art. This fact renders it difficult to form true statements about plays. There is an immeasurable number of performances derived from a singular script, and this can blur what kinds of truths we can express about a play. I hope that this thesis can help broaden the discussion on truth in fiction by approaching performative works of art, in addition to the literary ones.

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